

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8470

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, GR

SUBJECT: ANNIVERSARY OF GREEK JUNTA: BAD ENDING TO
AN IMPRESSIVE COMMEMORATION

REF: ATHENS 3080, 3090, 3091, 3092 (ALL NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. THE EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE APRIL 21, 1967 COUP WAS OBSERVED WITH A DRAMATIC AND GENERALLY OBSERVED NOON "SILENCE" THROUGHOUT THE GREEK CAPITAL, AND WITH TWO HUGE RALLIES AT THE POLYTECHNION, THE FIRST A SIMPLE AND SOMBER AFFAIR AND THE SECOND A MILITANTLY ANIT-AMERICAN ONE. THE LATTER EVENT CLIMAXED IN A MOB SCENE IN FRONT OF THE U.S. EMBASSY WHICH SUSTAINED ITS
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FIRST EXTENSIVE DAMAGE UNDER ATTACK BY YOUNG

DEMONSTRATORS. SEVEN POLICEMEN AND TWENTY-FIVE CIVILIANS WERE REPORTEDLY HOSPITALIZED. CLASHES BETWEEN GROUPS OF YOUNG DEMONSTRATORS, AND BETWEEN SUCH GROUPS AND THE POLICE ALSO OCCURRED ELSEWHERE IN DOWNTOWN ATHENS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE RETURN OF CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT LAST JULY SET IN MOTION A CALENDAR OF FIRST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS, THE GREATEST OF WHICH UNTIL YESTERDAY WAS LAST NOVEMBER'S FIRST OBSERVANCE OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1973 POLYTECHNION UPRISING. THAT COMMEMORATION SENT SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND ATHENIANS ON A PEACEFUL MARCH PAST THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. YESTERDAY WAS THE FIRST OBSERVANCE UNDER A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT OF THE JUNTA'S SEIZURE OF POWER ON APRIL 21, 1967, AND STIMULATED A SERIES OF PUBLIC CEREMONIES. THE PRINCIPAL POPULAR EVENT WAS A MAMMOTH RALLY AND MARCH TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY ORGANIZED BY THE YOUTH GROUPS OF ALL POLITICAL PARTIES. UNFORTUNATELY IT ENDED IN DISORDER AND AN ATTACK AGAINST THE EMBASSY WHICH SUFFERED DAMAGE (SEE REFTELS NOTAL).

3. THE STAGE WAS SET FOR THE APRIL 21 COMMEMORATION BY A FLURRY OF "WE REMEMBER" FEATURES IN EVERY ATHENS DAILY OVER THE WEEKEND. ON THE EVE OF THE GREAT "REMERBRANCE" DAY, ALL POLITICAL LEADERS, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, ISSUED STATEMENTS EXHORTING THE GREEK PEOPLE TO "NEVER LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN." A CITY-WIDE MINUTE OF SILENCE WAS WIDELY OBSERVED AT NOON ON APRIL 21. MOST PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND AUTOMOBILES STOPPED IN THE STREETS AND CITIZENS HALTED AND STOOD AT ATTENTION. THE NATIONAL RADIO PLAYED TAPS AND BUGLERS IN THE CITY'S MAIN SQUARED REPEATED THE SUMMONS TO SOMBER REMEMBRANCE.

4. TWO CEREMONIES WERE HELD AT THE POLYTECHNION. A LARGE CROWD WITNESSED A BRIEF AND QUIET CEREMONY AT NOON, IN WHICH JUNTA TORTURE VICTIN COLONEL MOUSTAKLIS AND THE PARENTS OF A STUDENT KILLED AT THE POLYTECHNION IN NOVEMBER 1973 LAID TWO WREATHS AT THE UNIVERSITY'S MAIN GAGE. AT 5:00 P.M. A LARGER RALLY BEGAN AT THE POLYTECHNION, SPONSORED BY THE YOUTH MLVEMENTS OF ALL THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLITICAL PARTIES. LEFTISTS DOMINATED THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS GATHERING WHOSE PARTICIPANTS CARRIED ANTI-JUNTA BANNERS AS WELL AS SOME ATTRIBUTING RESPONSIBILITY TO THE U.S. FOR THE APRIL 21 COUP. UNDER A GIANT BANNER, "TO TO FASCISM AND IMPERIALISM," A MILE LONG COLUMN OF HUMANITY MOVED FROM THE POLYTECHNION, GATHERING SUPPORTERS FROM OTHER ASSEMBLY POINTS, AND ARRIVING BEFORE THE AMERICAN EMBASSY AT 8:00 P.M. THE MAYOR-ELECT OF ATHENS, JOHN

PAPATHEODOROU, OTHER CIVIC OFFICIALS AND MANY SUBURBAN MAYORS LED THE MARCH. ALL CLASSES, TYPES AND AGES, EXCLUDING THE VERY POOR AND RICH, APPEARED TO BE REPRESENTED AMONG THE MARCHERS. A LARGE CROWD HAD ALREADY GATHERED ON THE SIDEWALKS AROUND THE EMBASSY TO OBSERVE THE PROTEST MARCH PAST THE EMBASSY.

5. THE "MARCH PAST," UNFORTUNATELY, NEVER OCCURRED. IN CONTRAST TO EARLIER MARCHES OF PROTEST, ON THIS OCCASION NEITHER THE MARCH MONITORS NOR THE POLICE APPEARED ABLE TO KEEP THE PROTESTERS MOVING. A GREAT PORTION OF THE LEAD COLUMN, PRIMARILY THE MIDDLE CLASS PARTICIPANTS AND ALL THE OFFICIALS, DISPERSED UPON REACHING THE EMBASSY, MANY OF THEM JOINING THE GROWING CROWD OF OBSERVERS ON THE SIDELINES. THE MAIN MARCH COLUMN, HOWEVER, DOMINATED BY YOUNG PEOPLE, SIMPLY IMPACTED INTO A HUGE MASS OF PEOPLE PRESSING TOWARD THE FRONT OF THE EMBASSY. THE NORTHEAST END OF THE EMBASSY (WHERE THE CONSULAR SECTION'S VISA UNIT IS LOCATED), TOOK THE GREATEST CROWD PRESSURE BUT WAS THINLY GUARDED THROUGHOUT THE DEMONSTRATION BY A SINGLE FILE OF POLICEMEN. THE ABSENCE OF A SOLID PHALANX OF POLICE AT THIS ENTRANCE TO THE EMBASSY BUILDING AREA WAS A STRIKING EXCEPTION TO POLICE TACTICS ON SIMILAR OCCASIONS EARLIER. THE POLICE APPEARED UNARMED TO THE DEMONSTRATORS, KEEPING THEIR WEAPONS AND SMALL CLUBS SECURED. THE BURNING OF SEVERAL AMERICAN FLAGS AT ABOUT 8:25 P.M. SIGNALLED THE START OF A CONCERTED ASSAULT UPON THE EMBASSY PROPERTY BY ROCK THROWING AND PAINT BOMBARDING YOUTH. THE BREAKTHROUGH CAME AT THE WEAKLY PROTECTED CONSULAR CORNER OF THE PROPERTY. AT LEAST ONE DEMONSTRATOR ENTERED THE EMBASSY THROUGH A BROKEN WINDOW BEFORE TEAR GAS GRENADES THROWN BY THE POLICE FINALLY DISPERSED THE CROWD.

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6. THE GREEK PARLIAMENT WHICH HAD BEEN ORATING ON THE CAUSES OF THE APRIL 21 COUP IN AN EVENING SESSION ABRUPTLY RECESSED WHEN ONE DEPUTY BROUGHT ONTO THE FLOOR A YOUNG WOMAN WHOSE FACE WAS FLUSHED AS A RESULT OF TEAR GAS RELEASED BY THE POLICE IN A SMALL FRACAS IN CONSTITUTION SQUARE.

7. ACCORDING TO APRIL 22 PRESS REPORTS, EXTREMIST ELEMENTS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR VIOLENCE THAT TOOK PLACE. APOYEVMATINI REPORTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE EKKE (THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT OF GREECE) HAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACK ON THE EMBASSY. KUBISCH

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